The End and Design of God's Judgments:

A SERMON

Preach'd before the

House of Lords,

AT THE

ABBEY-CHURCH

IN

WESTMINSTER,

On FRIDAY, *December* 8. 1721.

Being the DAY appointed for a General FAST, for obtaining the Pardon of our Sins, and averting those heavy Judgments we have most justly deserved; and particularly the PLAGUE, with which several other Countries are at this Time visited.

By the Right Reverend Father in GOD,

THOMAS Lord Bishop of NORWICH.

LONDON:

Printed for JOHN WYAT, at the *Rose* in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard. MDCCXXI.

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Isa. XXVI. 9.

---- *When thy Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteouſneſs.*

IT being the Original Deſign of God's creating Mankind, that they might ſerve him here in Holineſs, and ſo be happy for ever hereafter; he has been pleas'd to exert himſelf towards them in various Methods, ſuitable to their Nature, as reaſonable free Creatures, in order to produce that gracious End. Sometimes he deals with them in the Way of his *Mercies*; by thoſe gentler Diſpenſations, endeavouring to oblige and win them to their Duty, and as it is were with the Cords of Love, and the Bands of a Man, as he expreſſeth himſelf by his Prophet, *Hoſ.* xi. 4. to draw them to it. And ſometimes he treats them in the Way of his *Judgments*; by

thoſe ſeverer Methods forcing them to conſider, how Great he is, and how abominable they are, in perſiſting in their wicked Ways, and ſinning againſt him. The Former is the Way, wherein the Gracious and Good God, the Father of Mercies, and Lover of Souls, chiefly delights to deal with his Creatures, that he may *by his Goodneſs, and Long-ſuffering, and Forbearance towards them*, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *lead them to Repentance*, Rom. ii. 4. But the Latter is the Courſe, which he very unwillingly takes with them, when he is wearied with their continual Provocations, and they will not be prevailed upon by the Former, to amend their evil Doings.

It is of theſe Latter, the *Judgments* of God, which my Text, and the Solemn Occaſion of our Meeting at this Time, do lead me to treat. Which I ſhall do in this following Method.

I. I ſhall ſhew, that the End and Deſign of God's *Judgments*, is *to teach the Inhabitants of the World to be Righteous.*

II. The

II. The great Propriety and Fitneſs of them to that End.

III. That not to learn Righteouſneſs by the *Judgments* of God, is an Argument of the greateſt Perverſeneſs, Wickedneſs, and Folly.

IV. I ſhall Conclude with an Application ſuitable to the preſent Solemnity.

I. I ſhall ſhew, That the End and Deſign of God's *Judgments*, is *to teach the Inhabitants of the World to be Righteous.* *Thy Judgments*, ſays the *Pſalmiſt* unto God, *Pſal.* xxxvi. 6. *are a great Deep.* And the ſame alſo is ſaid by St. *Paul*, Rom. xi. 33. *O the Depth of the Riches, both of the Wiſdom and Knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways paſt finding out!*

Thus indeed they often are, with regard to Private Perſons and Families; ſo deep and intricate, that we cannot find out the Reaſon of them. Which ſhould teach us all, not to be too raſh and haſty in giving our Opinion of them, with Regard to thoſe Private Perſons, as if they were undoubtedly greater Sinners than other Men, whom

we

we ſee to be exerciſed with ſuch ſevere Diſpenſations of God's Providence. There may be many other excellent Ends for them, than that which we ſuppoſe; and therefore it's a great Fault, and very unjuſt with regard both to God and them, for us to be too hard and ſevere in our Cenſures upon thoſe, whom we ſee to be afflicted with them: Unleſs ſome very notorious Crimes in thoſe Perſons have been the Fore-runners of them. Then indeed, it becomes us to take notice of God's Juſtice, and to revere his Vengeance, and to learn from his Severity upon ſuch great Sinners, to fear God, and to avoid thoſe Sins, which have brought down ſuch *Judgments* from God upon them.

But as to Nations and Kingdoms, when they are afflicted with God's *Judgments*, we may very ſafely pronounce, that they are the Crying Sins of thoſe Nations, which have called loud for Vengeance, and provoked God to deal with them in ſo ſevere a Manner. I do not ſay, that we ought to pronounce them to be greater Sinners, than thoſe Nations which God ſpares; for among Sinners, God may puniſh which of them, and

and when he pleaſes, and God has always undoubtedly moſt wiſe Reaſons for what he does, in ſparing the one, and puniſhing the other; but theſe he is not pleaſed to acquaint us with.

Now the Reaſon why God oftner puniſhes Nations, than ſingle Perſons, with his *Judgments*, may be this. A wicked Nation, as ſuch, can be puniſhed only in this World. As for ſingle wicked Perſons, if God permits them to go on in their vicious Courſes in this World, without ſeverely animadverting upon them for it, there is a Time moſt certainly coming, which he has given them ſufficient Notice of, that they might conſider it, and be reclaimed by the Terrors of it, and if they will not now be perſuaded by them, he will then call them to a ſevere Account for them, and then ſhall they *feel a Judgment worthy of God*, in their eternal Deſtruction.

But there will be no Conſideration of Mankind at that great Day, as united in ſuch a Society as a Nation; but every one muſt anſwer for himſelf, and bear his own Burthen, which the righteous Judge of the World will then lay upon him. So

that unleſs a wicked Nation be puniſhed in this World, it muſt go unpuniſhed as a Nation for ever. God knows indeed, which is the fitteſt Time to ſend his *Judgments* upon a wicked Nation, which is the Reaſon that they do not always feel them immediately, when others think that they may deſerve them. But they have always Reaſon to fear them, for at one Time or other they will come moſt certainly, and heavily too; unleſs there be a proper Courſe taken to prevent them, by Repentance and an Amendment of their evil Ways.

God's *Judgments* upon a wicked Nation, are *Puniſhments* for their Sins. But *Puniſhments* are not always to deſtroy, but ſometimes by Correction to amend that Nation, on which they are inflicted. For there are *Salutary Puniſhments*, as well as *Deſtructive* ones. They are ſevere indeed to thoſe who are deſtroyed by them; but they are great Mercies to thouſands of others, who are intended to be inſtructed and admoniſhed by them to fear the Lord, and to forſake, and be reformed from thoſe Sins, which have coſt the Committers of them

them so dear. So that *the Judgments of God, which are abroad in the Earth, are indeed the wise Methods, which the great Physician of the World uses for the Cure of Mankind.*

For it is not that God takes Pleasure in such Severities, or that he delights in the Miseries and Calamities of his Creatures, that he makes use of such harsh and rigorous Ways with them, but purely out of a merciful Design to them, to hasten their Repentance, and to prevent their utter Ruine. He always first tries the gentler Methods of his Goodness and Forbearance, to bring Men to a Sense of their Duty, and to an Amendment of their Ways. But when the Perverseness and Obstinacy of Men will not be wrought upon by them, then is he provoked to change them into Ways of Harshness and Severity, and forceth himself, as it were, against his Inclination, to take the Rod into his Hand, and chastise them with it. His infinite Goodness is so averse to *Judgments*, that he is represented in Scripture, as not knowing hardly which Way to set about them: and therefore they are called by the Prophet, *his*

strange Work, Isa. xxviii. 21. How loth does he, by his Prophet *Hosea* also, declare himself to come to it, saying, Hos. xi. 8. *How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My Heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.* And in other Places he calls upon his rebellious People *Israel*, in the most affectionate and moving Manner, to repent of their Wickedness, and so avert his *Judgments*. *Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine Anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep mine Anger for ever; only acknowledge that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God*, Jer. iii. 12, 13. *O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from Wickedness, that thou mayest be saved*, Jer. iv. 14. and Again, *Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my Soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate*, Jer. vi. 8. And at last, when he pours forth his *Judgments*, there is still a secret Mercy lying hid under that Severity. When he shews himself most angry with a wicked People for their Sins, it is still with a Design of Pity towards them.

them. He is loth to see them perish in their pleasant Ways, and therefore embitters their Lives by Miseries, rather than suffer them to be utterly undone by Softness and Indulgence. He casts them into the Furnace of Affliction, that he may refine and purify them from their Dross. He would fain have them repent and amend their evil Ways, and by his severe *Judgments* calls upon them *to hear the Rod, and who hath appointed it*; and to learn from thence to *go and sin no more, lest a worse Thing come unto them*, and they be ruined and undone for ever.

That the Amendment of a People is the Design of God's *Judgments*, is still further evident from hence also, that as soon as they have accomplished the End he aims at by them, he does always remove them. For undoubtedly, there never was any Nation in the World, that did not experience the Return of God's Mercy towards them, in his Pardoning, and even in his Blessing of them, upon their true Repentance. Whenever God's Providence has made use of his sharp and cutting Instruments to let out the Corruption of any wicked People, and the Event has answered his Expectation; he-

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that has wounded them, does then heal them; according to that of the Prophet *Hosea*, vi. 1. *Come, and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.*

Nay, if but the Threatning of his *Judgments* has the Effect he aims at, the Reformation of that People to whom they are threatned, there he stops, and goes no further, though even the very Time for them had been determined by him. As he has plainly shewn us in the Case of *Nineveh*; for as soon as *he saw their Works* that they repented in Earnest, and *turned from their evil Ways, he also* presently *repented of the Evil which he said*, by his Prophet, that *he would do unto them, and he did it not*, Jonah iii. 10.

II. And so I come to the second Thing I proposed, To shew the Propriety and Fitness of God's *Judgments*, to teach the Inhabitants of the World to be righteous. *When thy Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness.*

Now this appears these Two Ways: First, they make Men more serious and disposed to consider, and so put them into

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the best Temper for Repentance. 2 Secondly, they are apt to raise in Men's Minds a greater Awe and Fear of God.

1. First, they make Men more serious and disposed to consider, and so put them into the best Temper for Repentance. One of the great Causes, if not the chief, of the Wickedness of Mankind, is want of Consideration. Thus saith the LORD, by his Prophet *Jeremiah*, of his rebellious People *Israel*, Ch. viii. 6. *No Man repented him of his Wickedness, saying, What have I done? Every one turned to his Course, as the Horse rusheth into the Battel.* That is, they never considered the Evil, the Folly, and the Danger of their wicked Courses, whereby they had so long provoked God, but like that unthinking Animal violently rush'd on into the midst of Perils, not regarding what Mischiefs they were like to do themselves thereby. If Men could but once be brought to consider the Evil of their Ways, the Work of Repentance would soon begin to follow it. It would be almost impossible, that reasonable Creatures should continue in a Course of Sin, and should act so contrary to their Reason and their Con-

Conſcience; to their own Good and Intereſt in this World, and to their eternal Happineſs in the next; if they would but give themſelves leave to think and conſider what they are a doing, and whither thoſe Courſes will unavoidably lead them at laſt. For Vice owes all the Dominion it has over Men, to their unthinking careleſs Way of Living. Men ſtifle their Reaſon, and ſuffer themſelves to be hurried by Senſe into the Embraces of ſinful Objects, not conſidering what the End of thoſe Things will be; what Miſchiefs and Inconveniences they may plunge themſelves into by them in this World, nor what is like to become of them hereafter, becauſe of them. So that the only Way to bring them to abhor Sin and Wickedneſs, and to haſten their Repentance for it, is to make them ſerious and diſpoſed to conſider; and nothing can be more likely to do that, than the Terrors of God's *Judgments*.

God has made Fear a very prevailing Paſſion in the Soul of Man. And This when rouzed, awakens all its Powers, to put forth their utmoſt Efforts for his Preſervation. When Adverſity and Affliction ſit hard upon

on Men, they take off all Lightneſs and Vanity of Spirit, and make them ſober and attentive to the Voice of Reaſon and Conſcience. They awaken Men's Minds, which before were ſtupefied with Sin, into Conſideration, and make Men think ſeriouſly, whether they will or no, and by that Means ſoften them for the Impreſſions of wiſer Counſels. *In their Afflictions*, ſays God, of that fooliſh thoughtleſs People, who would not before be prevailed upon by his Mercies, to repent and amend their Ways, *they will ſeek me early*, Hoſ. v. *ult.* Thoſe will open their Eyes, and ſhew them their Wickedneſs, and that will put them upon the moſt effectual Ways to make their peace with God, and to ſeek his Mercy, by a true Repentance and Reformation. Juſt ſuch was the Caſe of the Prodigal; he never thought of returning to his Father, till pinching Hunger and extreme Neceſſity forced him. They brought him to conſider how greatly he had ſinned againſt God and his Father, and that brought him to reſolve on a Return to him.

2. Secondly, God's *Judgments* are apt to raiſe in Men's Minds a greater Awe and

Fear of him, and thereby to teach them to be Righteous. Though there are ſome Sinners, it may be, of ſo pliable and eaſy a Temper, as to be reclaimed by milder and ſofter Methods; ſuch on whom the Threatnings of *Judgments* may have the happy Influence of reducing them to good; yet there are others likewiſe, and they generally the far greater Number, ſo hardened by long Habits of Vice, grown ſo headſtrong and obſtinate in their evil Ways, and ſo madly bent upon their own Ruin, that to try to reclaim theſe by gentler Arts of Perſuaſion is to no Purpoſe. *The only Way then left to deal with them, is Rigor and Severity. When Sinners*, ſays a late great Divine, *are thus beſides themſelves, ſomething that looks like Cruelty, is perhaps the greateſt Mercy that can be ſhown to them*, as being the only thing that can bring them to themſelves again.

This God beholds, and therefore applies his Remedies accordingly. Then he leaves off Threatning, and proceeds to an actual Infliction of his *Judgments*. And when ſuch Inſtances of God's Vengeance do lie heavy upon a wicked People, theſe are

apt

apt to awaken even the ſtupid and careleſs, and to ſtrike upon their Minds a greater Awe and Dread of God, than any *Judgments*, though very ſevere, upon ſingle Perſons only are apt to do. The Fame thereof reaches further, and is more terrible. Wicked Men are oftentimes wont to encourage themſelves in Wickedneſs by their Numbers. But when they hear of the heavy Wrath of God poured out upon whole Nations, for their Impieties, as by violent Inundations of Water, by a devouring Fire, by ſudden and ſurprizing Earthquakes, by a dreadful Famine, by a raging Peſtilence, by a lingring and deſtroying War, by diſmal Storms of Wind, and the like: This is enough, one would think, to make the ſtrongeſt and ſtouteſt Combinations of Sinners to tremble and grow pale. When they hear or ſee how Great, how Mighty, how Terrible the Lord God of Heaven and Earth is, from whoſe all-ſeeing Eyes none of their Sins can be conceal'd, and whom no Numbers, no Powers are able to withſtand or reſiſt, when he ariſes terribly to take Vengeance upon an ungodly People: This, if any Thing, will affrighten the moſt bold

and daring Sinners into a ſpeedy Repentance of their wicked Ways.

Whereas, if God ſhould always ſuffer a wicked People, to go on without any ſuch ſevere Checks in their Impieties; This, (conſidering the Proneneſs of Mankind to Wickedneſs,) would tempt others to think, that they may ſafely do ſo too, and ſo by Degrees would go a great way towards rooting all Senſe of Goodneſs and Religion out of the World. And therefore to prevent That, which would be the ſaddeſt Calamity of all to Mankind, when his Mercy and Patience have been long deſpis'd, God ſuffers his Juſtice and *Judgments* to take place; that Men may be forced to Fear him, who is ſo terrible in his Doings, and *to turn unto him that ſmiteth them.* Which brings me to the Third Thing I propoſed,

III. That not to learn Righteouſneſs by the *Judgments* of God, is an Argument of the greateſt Perverſeneſs, Wickedneſs, and Folly. This Effect might in Reaſon be expected, That from the Terribleneſs of God's *Judgments* the Inhabitants of the World ſhould be induced to reform and amend their evil

evil Ways. And yet it ſometimes happens otherwiſe, and they prove ineffectual to that End. There are ſome Tempers ſtrangely refractory, perverſe, and obſtinate; and Sin, when it has been long continued in, is of an infatuating Nature, and renders Men incorrigible. Of this, wicked *Ahab* was a remarkable Inſtance; of whom the Holy Spirit of God has recorded, to his eternal Infamy, that *in the time of his Diſtreſs, he ſinned yet more againſt the Lord*, 2 *Chron.* xxviii. 22. Such likewiſe did the obdurate *Egyptians* ſhew themſelves to be. Every new Addition of a Plague did ſtill but more and more harden their Hearts, and made them leſs willing to obey God, *in letting the Iſraelites go.* And this, to their Shame be it ſpoken, was the Temper of God's own People, the Children of *Iſrael*, who were ſo far from being reformed by the ſeveral ſore *Judgments*, which God inflicted upon them for their Sins, that they ſtill multiplied their Provocations, and grew but worſe and worſe for their Correction; which occaſion'd God's deſponding Complaint of them, for their Incorrigibleneſs, by his Prophet *Iſaiah*, Ch. i. 5. ſaying;

Why

Why ſhould ye be ſtricken any more, ye will revolt more and more?

But this certainly is the worſt of Tempers, and uſually is but a ſad Preſage of the utter Ruin and Deſtruction of thoſe in whom it is found. Such it was moſt certainly in all thoſe Inſtances, I have juſt now named. All *Ahab*'s Houſe, though very numerous, were quickly after entirely deſtroy'd. All *Pharaoh*'s Chariots, his Hoſt, and his Captains, were daſh'd in Pieces, and drowned in the *Red-Sea*. And *Iſrael* ſoon after that became a Prey to their Enemies, who miſerably deſtroyed them, and carried them into a ſad Captivity in a ſtrange Land, from which they never returned to this very Day. Moſt dreadful therefore is the Anger of God, when his Patience, being long deſpiſed, is at laſt turned into Fury!

For this Reaſon, what diſmal and terrible Deſtructions has he brought upon the Earth; at one Time, deſtroying a whole World of Sinners, by an irreſiſtible Deluge, after he had a long Time ſtrove with them, by leſſer *Judgments* to reclaim them? For this, Five great Cities, deaf to all his former Warnings, were at laſt conſumed by

Fire

Fire and Brimstone rained upon them from Heaven, and *are set forth for an Example, suffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire.* For the Incorrigibleness of their Inhabitants, under God's gentler Severities, many have been the Alterations and Changes, and Desolations of several great and mighty Kingdoms, and many flourishing Churches ruined, so that nothing but the Names of them do now remain, and the very Places thereof are almost forgotten. And Foolish therefore must it needs be to the last Degree, as well as Wicked, for weak Mortals, poor sinful Creatures, to contend with the Mighty God for the Mastery. He always had, and ever will have the better. *God will not be outbraved by the Sins of Men.* But if they will still remain impenitent, under his lesser *Judgments*, he will still punish them more and more for their Sins, and add greater and greater Severities, till he has quite destroyed them. If they will not glorify him by their Repentance, for his Forbearance and Long-suffering, he will get himself Glory upon them by their Destruction. *O consider this all ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you!*

And

And ſo I come in the laſt Place to make an Application ſuitable to the preſent Solemnity.

IV. We are met this Day, by the Command of our moſt Religious and Gracious Sovereign, to implore God's *Mercy* in the Pardon of our Sins, and in averting thoſe *Judgments*, which we have the greateſt Reaſon to fear, becauſe of them; and in particular, that moſt grievous and heavy one of a *Devouring Peſtilence*, with which ſeveral other Countries have lately been, and ſome are at this Time viſited; and which has more eſpecially ſo violently raged in a neighbouring Country, that within the Compaſs of a little more than one Year, it has laid waſte many large Villages, and almoſt depopulated ſeveral very flouriſhing Cities: A *Peſtilence*, ſo various in its Attacks, that it has hitherto eluded all the Arts of Phyſick to find out Remedies proper for it; a *Peſtilence*, which notwithſtanding all the Force that has been employed to keep it within Bounds, and the Methods that have been taken to put a Stop to it, hath ſtill, in Defiance of them all, marched in Triumph, as it were, through ſeveral Parts of that unhappy Kingdom,

dom, ſpreading its deadly Infection ſo uncontroulably, firſt on one Side, and then on another, as if it threatned to go through the whole Land. And whether or no it may not at laſt involve the neighbouring Nations, and ours among the reſt, in the ſame moſt fatal and dreadful Calamity, God alone knows.

It is now Fifty Five Years, ſince this Nation was infected with any *Peſtilential Diſtemper*; a Space of Time longer than ever this Nation was known to have eſcaped the like before. Not that we have leſs deſerved ſuch a *Judgment* than our Fathers before us did, (I wiſh I could ſee any Reaſon to ſuppoſe that;) but it has been owing to God's wonderful *Mercy* alone towards us, that he has ſpared us ſo long from ſo ſevere a Scourge.

For it has pleaſed God, like a prudent and indulgent Father, by various Methods of his Providence towards this Nation, of late Years, to endeavour to bring us to a Conſideration of our wicked Ways, that we might amend them. One while inviting us to it by many Bleſſings, and at another trying to reclaim us by the Severity of his

Judgments, and then graciouſly removing them again; as he dealt with his own People the *Jews*, whom he was loth to give up fully to them.

It is ſtill freſh in the Memory of moſt of us, how, but a very few Years ſince, for our Lukewarmneſs in the beſt and pureſt Religion in the World, for our Diſregard to, and groſs Contempt of the holy Duties of it, we were well nigh being deprived of the glorious Light of it, which ſhone in upon us at the Reformation, and being carried back into an *Egyptian* Darkneſs of Popery, and the Bondage of Tyranny and Slavery along with it. While the Fears of loſing our Religion were upon us, and Idolatry, Superſtition and Slavery, ſeemed to be coming upon us with a high Hand, it was indeed obſerved, that Men did appear more truly concerned for it, more devout in their Prayers, and more ſerious than ordinary in other religious Duties. But all this was but in Appearance only. For no ſooner did God in his great Mercy raiſe up *a Deliverer* for us, *our late Gracious Sovereign King* WILLIAM, *of Glorious Memory*, and wonderfully conduct him hither for our Reſcue,

Reſcue, making all Oppoſition, in a moſt ſurprizing Manner, to fall before him; but we, ſoon forgetting our Fears and God's Mercy together, return'd again to our old Indifferency for Religion, and for the Sacred Duties of it.

Upon this, we were engaged in a long and expenſive War, in which, though God was pleas'd to give us many very conſiderable Succeſſes and glorious Victories, yet the Loſs of ſo many of our brave Countrymen, who were cut off by it, and the Decay of our Riches and Strength which attended it, and the inconſiderable Advantages which we gained in the Concluſion of it, in Regard to what, (as wiſe Men thought) we might juſtly have expected, do all ſhew it to have been a very ſevere *Judgment* upon us.

During this War, though God was loth to ſuffer us to fall into the Hands of Men, yet he was pleas'd to puniſh us himſelf by ſo furious and dreadful a Storm of Wind, in which many of our Ships were loſt at Sea, and ſuch incredible Miſchief and Damage was done by Land, that the like is not to be parallel'd in any of our Hiſtories.

Next to theſe, while we were yet endeavouring to repair thoſe Breaches, which the juſt-now-mentioned Calamities had made in the Wealth and Strength of the Nation; ſee how terribly God did of late ſhew his Anger againſt us in another Way, by giving us up to our ſelves, and chaſtiſing us very ſeverely by one another.

It is the Obſervation of a late Great and Pious Prelate, that *when Impiety and Wickedneſs are at the higheſt Pitch in a Nation, then they themſelves are the only proper Inſtruments topuniſh one another.* This was the ſad Fate of the *Jewiſh* Nation, when their Iniquities were come to the full. As God had foretold by his Prophet, that *their own Wickedneſs ſhould correct them*, Jer. ii. 19. ſo it hapned to them. The *Romans*, their Enemies, were gentle to them, in reſpect of their own evil Doings towards one another. *None*, ſays he, *but their own barbarous ſelves were capable of ſo much Cruelty and Inhumanity, as they experienced from themſelves, and was indeed requiſite to puniſh them to ſuch a Degree, as their Sins had deſerved.*

May we not juſtly ſay, that ſomething very like this has been our Caſe? Such an unbound-

unbounded Covetouſneſs, and unſatisfied Love of Money, as was never known before in this Nation, having of late, (to the Accumulation of all our other manifold Impieties) ſhown it ſelf amongſt us, by the univerſal Inclination of all Ranks of Men and Women too to exceſſive Gaming, God was pleas'd to permit the Wickedneſs of ſome, and the Folly of others, to be the Occaſion of bringing ſuch a Curſe and Blaſt upon us, as never was felt before by this Nation; by which we have been all of a ſudden ſtrangely impoveriſhed in the Midſt of Plenty, our Riches having made themſelves Wings, and flying away no body knows whither; and more Families and ſingle Perſons have been undone and ruined, than hardly ever were known to have been ſo, by the moſt tedious and lingring War.

This is the ſad State into which we are plunged, and it will require great Prudence, and a long Time to deliver us from the diſmal Effects of this Calamity. I pray God inſpire thoſe, who have the Management of our Affairs, with Wiſdom ſuitable to the Exigence of them.

But

But if after all this, God ſhould be pleaſed to ſend among us that dreadful Scourge of the *Devouring Peſtilence*, which we have ſo much Reaſon to fear, this muſt of Neceſſity compleat our Ruin. I am ſure it can hardly be expected that he ſhould not, if we ſhould ſtill go on in thoſe Sins without Repentance, which have provoked him to ſend thoſe *Judgments* upon us already.

For ſurely, all this is not for nothing, that God has brought us thus low, and does ſtill threaten to bring us lower, with more and more heavy *Judgments*. No; the Reaſon is plainly this, that we are ſtill Impenitent. Notwithſtanding the diſmal Calamities we have already felt, Wickedneſs ſtill overflows the Nation like a mighty Deluge, ſo as to overſpread all Ranks and Orders of Men amongſt us. Do not our Eyes behold it continually, in the open Atheiſm, Prophaneneſs and Impiety; in the Hypocriſy and Diſſimulation; in the Contempt of God and his holy Worſhip; in the Prophanation of his holy Day; in the bold Infidelity, and *Denying the Lord that bought us*; in the dreadful Abuſe of God's Great and Glorious Name, by the horrid Oaths, Curſes,

ſes, and Imprecations, which are heard continually in our Streets, and in the Places of Concourſe and Converſation; in the Practice of the moſt filthy and abominable Luſts; in the Lewdneſs and Luxury; in the Oppreſſion and Injuſtice; in the implacable Malice and Hatred of one towards another; and in our ſenſeleſs Diviſions and Animoſities, without Cauſe and without End, which reign every where?

And can we then hope for *Peace* and *Mercy*, ſo long as our Abominations are ſo many? May we not much rather fear, that God ſhould pour forth the Severity of his Anger upon us, until he hath conſumed us, and there be no eſcaping? O let us all therefore, as we have too freely contributed to the heavy load of Guilt which lies upon the Nation, by our many and grievous Sins againſt the Divine Majeſty, apply our ſelves heartily to the great Duties of this Day, a ſerious and deep Repentance and Humiliation of our ſelves before Almighty God for them. Who knows, but that ſo doing, we may ſtill find Mercy with a moſt merciful God? Since *Peace is not yet wholly hid from our eyes*, O let us all be inſtructed,

and

and *in this our Day ſee the Things that belong to it! Let us all ſeek the Lord while he may be found*, and cry mightily unto him for the Pardon of our many and abominable Provocations. *Let the wicked forſake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and turn unto the Lord with all his Heart, and with all his Soul, that God may alſo be intreated to turn from his fierce Anger, that we periſh not.*

Laſtly, To our Repentance and Prayers, let us add alſo our liberal Alms, and according to the Counſel given by the Prophet *Daniel* to *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Let us break off our Sins by Righteouſneſs, and our Iniquities by ſhewing Mercy to the Poor, if ſo be it may be a lengthning of our Tranquillity.*

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour, Glory and Praiſe, both now and for evermore. Amen.

FINIS.